

HH



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 4, 2010

Contact: Ed Maddox 213-361-6980

Email: emaddox@bos.lacounty.gov

STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS REGARDING SETTLEMENT OF ACLU LAWSUIT OVER PROBATION YOUTH CAMPS

Los Angeles—The Probation Department is now on probation. Today's settlement of an important lawsuit on behalf of incarcerated youth at the County's Challenger Camps presents a potential road map to real reform – the question will be whether the Probation Department is able to stick to the course set by this settlement and reach its destination. It will be a difficult path for a department with so many entrenched problems...problems that prompted the lawsuit in the first place.

While the settlement of the lawsuit concerning the Challenger camps is clearly an important first step, I remain concerned that problems that have been identified at twelve other Los Angeles County youth camps be clearly defined and addresses at the earliest possible date.

I am pleased to see the involvement of Dr. Peter Leone in this effort. In September, I toured the Maya Angelou Academy, a school housed in a Washington, D.C. detention facility. It was precisely the kind of program we need here to put our youth on a path to success and divert them from future incarceration. The program was partly inspired by the work of Dr. Marian Wright Edelman and follows the Freedom School model she developed. I met with Dr.

Edelman last night and she and I are pleased to see this model gaining momentum.

This summer, we hosted Freedom Schools programs in my district for younger children. Although our program participants were elementary school students, the Freedom Schools model, which builds both academic and leadership skills, has been effective for teens in probation camps in Washington, D.C. and Houston, Texas--areas with juvenile ward populations much like our own in Los Angeles.

I will be watching the progress of this settlement closely, both in eager anticipation of its success, but also with a vigilant focus on ensuring that it is performing. Should evidence emerge that the Probation Department is again failing our youth, I am confident Dr. Leone and others will identify the obstacles to progress, and we shall address them by whatever means necessary.

#

On June 23, 2010, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas wrote an Op Ed article for the Huffington Post calling for an investigation of the LA County Probation Department by the US Department of Justice.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-ridleythomas/probation-needs-justice_b_621815.html